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My ref: TR/GR/9030

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Additional Local Plan Examination Documents consultation 4 July – 22 August 2025

Dear Sir / Madam,

On behalf of Linden Wates (Bricket Wood) Ltd, we are responding to the consultation currently underway by the Council on the additional documents published following the Stage 1 Hearings as part of the overall Examination of the Local Plan. Consistent with the representations submitted on the Draft Submission Plan together with the subsequent stage 1 Hearing Statements, the responses below are focused upon the Council's assessment of our client's land at Hanstead Park, Bricket Wood (primarily covered in the Council appraisal in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) under site ref STS-59-21). As indicated in the earlier submissions, this was within the wider site promoted at the former HSBC Training Centre assessed in the HELAA under site ref STS-01-18.

The observations in this response specifically relate to the following additional documents which are being consulted upon:

- SADC/ED78 – Green Belt: Previously Developed Land – Clarification; and
- SADC/ED81 – Site Sifting Process Addendum (including Appendices 1 & 2).

Observations on Document SADC/ED78 – Green Belt: Previously Development Land - Clarification

The Council's additional document SADC/ED78 seeks to explain the reasons for discounting any contribution within the overall land supply from the 3 sites discussed at the stage 1 Hearings, one of which "Hanstead Park" (or the "Former HSBC Management and Training Centre") was promoted on behalf of our clients. The Council at paragraph 5.2 of the document indicate that the 3 sites were excluded based upon the current built form on the respective sites, there was limited extent of this within the land promoted and consequently they would not accommodate the minimum 5 dwellings stated by the Council as the necessary yield for further consideration.

Whilst the information in Appendix C, especially with respect to the Hanstead Park site shows the current hard and soft landscaping on the wider site, delivered as part of the overall redevelopment of the former HSBC Training Centre, this negates the following points within the wider definition of previously developed land in the NPPF.

The definition is clear that previously developed land can take account of the former extent of built form and any hardstanding within the overall curtilage. The parcels promoted through the Local Plan representations and highlighted in the written statements and appearances at the Part 1 hearing sessions fall within this wider context of a confirmed previously developed site. These earlier submissions indicated that the land promoted was a running track and car park associated with the former Training Centre use and therefore as confirmed in the Secretary of State's appeal decision within the accepted previously developed land on the site. Consequently, the appraisal of the Hanstead Park site should have been undertaken in the context of the overall previously developed status of the wider site rather than the specific parcels. Such an approach would be consistent with that advanced in section 6 of our original representations.

The Council's assessment in Appendix C references the limited existing permanent built form in the respective parcels promoted. However, as indicated above, this is an incorrect assessment. For the land at Hanstead Park, the areas promoted were a running track and car park within the wider grounds of the Training Centre (now Hanstead Park) and consequently the assessment of the development potential should have been made within this as the underlying basis for consideration.

The Council as indicated in our representation should therefore have considered the running track and car park parcels as part of the wider confirmed previously developed status of the Hanstead Park (former HSBC Training Centre site) rather than as a distinct, stand-alone submission. The failure to consider the wider context of the Hanstead Park (former HSBC Centre site) as detailed in the representations and amplified through the written and verbal submissions to the stage 1 hearings means that the Council did not give the fullest consideration to land which is or has been previously developed as obligated by NPPF paragraph 147.

With specific reference to paragraph 2.1, the Council refer to an 'extensive search' that focused heavily on PDL sites inside built up areas. The same level of rigour was not applied to PDL opportunities in the Green Belt. Our client's site was discounted at an early stage because its development would not comply with GB Policy (i.e. it was considered there was not enough headroom left in the volume / floorspace of previous buildings). The purpose of the extensive search should have been open to the possibility of releasing Green Belt land for development. The approach taken is overly narrow in only considering allocating GB PDL sites if their development was already consistent with NPPF GB policy. Essentially, the approach taken is "if it would be allowed anyway, then we'll include it". Such a narrow focus **cannot** comply with NPPF paragraph 147.

With specific reference to paragraph 3.1, the site is found insufficient to yield 5 homes due to it being considered that all Green Belt volume / floorspace had been used up under the previous scheme. This is incorrect, as the scheme did not use all headroom. Further it is noted that the test now would be to not have a **substantial** impact upon the openness of the Green Belt, whilst the appeal was considered on a no greater impact upon the Green Belt basis. However, the key point is that the Council should have been identifying all Green Belt PDL opportunities, not just those where development was already permissible under NPPF policy (as above).

With reference to paragraph 4.1, we note the comment regarding sites outside buffers. No proformas are provided - just an informal officer review of the site. There is no evidence of how this approach has been duly followed or how this comprises a justified strategy, in the absence of such evidence. The point made at the hearing sessions was that **PDL is not limited to existing built form**. The curtilage also forms part of a PDL site. The Council's conclusion is based upon a misunderstanding of the definition of PDL. It can be PDL - even if no existing built form on that specific part of the site. Instead, one needs to review the planning unit as a whole. The appeal decision was clear it was one campus, with its grounds forming part of the PDL planning unit.

With reference to paragraph 5.2, this specifically relates to our site. The Council maintain it does not have sufficient PDL to yield 5 homes. The appeal decision says the whole site is PDL as grounds associated with the training centre and plainly, the site offers an opportunity for a far greater quantum of development than 5 units (circa 60 dwellings).

Specific observations on Document SADC/ED81 – Site Sifting Process Addendum (including Appendices)

This document details the approach to site sifting and how the conclusions of the HELAA (Ref HELAA 01.01) informed the subsequent review of potential allocations as detailed in the Site Selection – Proforma Methodology Paper (LPSS 02.02).

All the sites at Hanstead Park site were not appraised as the Council relied upon the implementation of the extant planning permission and did not consider the scope to provide at least 5 further dwellings (consistent with that advanced in the representations).

Furthermore, paragraph 1.23 of the Proforma Methodology Paper references the inclusion of either 400m or 250m buffers around existing Green Belt settlements. As indicated in our response to Question 5 in the Matter 2 Statement (amplified in our verbal submissions), the use of these buffers limited the potential consideration of sites, especially where they lie within 10 minute walk of a railway station (typically taken as 800m) and the guidance in NPPF (paragraph 109) that sustainable transport opportunities will vary between urban and rural areas, together with its advice (paragraph 147) that reviews of Green Belts should consider previously developed land and/or locations well-served by public transport. The use of 250m buffers around villages like Bricket Wood discount the clear opportunities for sites like Hanstead Park which are within 800m of the railway station where there are trains at least hourly with journey times of less than 10 minutes to Watford Junction or St Albans Abbey stations with connections from the former allowing access to/from London Euston in around 35 minutes.

Consequently, the approach in the Site Sifting Process Addendum has neither considered the full potential of confirmed previously developed site and/or those well-served by public transport such as Hanstead Park which accords with both criteria.

Conclusions

In accordance with paragraph 147 NPPF, the Council should first have given consideration to sites which are PDL and / or those which are well served by public transport. Yet this site was excluded at the initial HELAA stage (2021). It is further excluded by virtue of the Council's approach to focus upon sites only within the 250 or 400 metre buffer of identified Green Belt settlements and its failure to consider large developments that have occurred since 1994 in its settlement hierarchy study Part 1 (LPCD13.01) (as detailed in our Matter 2 statement). In summary, the Council concluded that the site was not available as it already had planning permission – despite our site promotion materials having made clear that it had capacity beyond the 138 dwelling consented scheme due to the large 20.54ha site having potential further development potential. The Council's combined approach to looking only at the 250 / 400 metre buffers, alongside an insufficient settlement hierarchy review have resulted in a failure to comply with paragraph 147. A comprehensive further review of sites such as our client's at Hanstead Park would assist the plan in being found sound by enabling earlier housing delivery from smaller sites and therefore achieving a plan that is more justified, effective and consistent with national policy. The additional documents being consulted upon by the Council do not change this position in any way.

The failures amplified above reflect those detailed in the representations and referenced in the written and verbal submissions to the Stage 1 Hearings. The Council have **not** demonstrated a “**leaving no stone unturned**” approach and our objections remains as previously set out.

Yours faithfully,

Woolf Bond Planning

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